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UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS

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The Soviet Union attaches much importance to putting into practice the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which was signed during an international conference of the United Nations in Copenhagen in July 1980. The Soviet Union, together with other socialist countries, initiated work on the creation of this important document, and was among the first to ratify it. The ratification of the Convention by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, which took place on 19 December 1980, does not create any need for new legislative measures in the USSR, since all the requirements of the Convention have either already been implemented or are being implemented in the USSR, and the relevant legislation has a long history of application. The principle of equality between men and women in all spheres of economic, political, social and cultural life is embodied in Article 35 of the Constitution of the USSR.

In the Soviet Union, concern for the systematic improvement of the position of women, and enhancement of the role played by them in all spheres of public life has been elevated to the level of state policy, and is guaranteed by a special system of social, economic and legislative measures.

A general appraisal of progress

The Soviet Union carries out a consistent policy in securing the all-round development of women's personalities, and implementing a series of measures, some legislative, to guarantee to women the exercise and enjoyment of their rights and freedoms on an equal basis with men.

In the USSR, both men and women enjoy the full range of socio-economic, political and personal rights and freedoms.

Ensuring the equality and progress of women forms one of the most important aims of government. Economic and social development plans regularly include measures to improve women's life and working conditions, protect the mother and child and improve the social assistance extended to the family.

The practical implementation of the principle of equal rights for men and women in the USSR is achieved through special measures provided for in the Constitution. These measures form a system of guarantees and privileges which allow work to be successfully combined with motherhood. The provisions are as follows:

- a prohibition of discrimination in any form in the sphere of labour relations; a guarantee of equal rights to a free choice of profession or qualification, to promotion, to equal pay for equal work and to paid leave;
- provision of equal access to education, professional training and improvement of skills;
- state protection of women's labour and health, secured through the prohibition against using women for work involving hard or harmful conditions, the provision of free health care in specialized institutions within the national health system, the development of children's preschool facilities and other forms of public care and maintenance for children;
- material and moral support for the mother and child, including maternity allowances to cover pregnancy and childbirth and the care of sick children, allowances for large families and single mothers, partly-paid leave for mothers with children up to the age of 12 months, privileged status in the sphere of social security, etc.;
- legal protection of the rights of women against discrimination of any kind by individuals, institutions or organizations.

As the economy of the Soviet state advances, so do the material and legal safeguards of the equality of women.

During 1976-80, a period coinciding with the first half of the United Nations' Women's Decade, a series of measures were implemented, designed to improve the social position of woman and the family. Thus, for instance, additional rights have been granted to paid leave to look after a sick child, state aid to those disabled from childhood has also been increased, free issue of textbooks to pupils in nonspecialized schools has started and state expenditure on maternity homes and children's hospitals has been increased. New wage benefits have been granted to women working in the textile and light

industries and in the chemical industry, as well as in non-manufacturing occupations, where women form 70% of the total workforce. Measures have been adopted to improve the professional training of women and the advancement of their skills.

To protect the interests of mothers, the state grants considerable financial aid to pregnant women and to families, for the maintenance and education of children. In 1980, the sums estimated by the state for social aid to mothers and social provision for children were 1.5 times greater than the amounts allocated for those purposes in 1970.

Expenditure on schooling, children's homes, day nurseries, pioneer camps and extracurricular children's activities alone formed approximately 60% of the state's expenditure on education.

The housing conditions of Soviet families, and above all families with children, are being systematically improved. During 1976-1980, over 10 million flats were built in our country. New design standards, giving improved layout and greater comfort, are being used in housing construction. In 1981 alone approximately 10 million people received new flats. Rentals have remained unchanged since 1928 and at the present time form, inclusive of a charge for public utilities, on average 3% of a worker's family income.

Since 1982 it has been the practice to give interest-free grants for housing improvement or setting-up house to young families with children, with a repayment period of up to 8 years. When a second or third child is born, the grant is partially repaid by the employer; one-third of the total grant can be repaid in this way.

The social measures implemented during recent years have raised the standard of living of the Soviet people and have consolidated the equal status of women. The resolutions of the XXVI Congress of the CPSU and the State Plan of the Economic and Social Development of the USSR for 1981-85 provide for a further rise in the people's standard of living, improving labour conditions for women and extending the state system of family aid. These aims are served by a wide range of measures designed to improve the financial position of families with children, their housing and living

standards, and the organization of relaxation and leisure, to increase free time available to working mothers, and to create favourable conditions for the upbringing of children and for fulfilling family and work obligations. The following measures were implemented during 1981-1982:

- additional holidays have been granted to working women with two or more children;
- the amount of financial assistance to single mothers has been increased;
- partially paid leave to enable mothers to look after children up to the age of one has been introduced, and at the same time additional leave without pay has been extended to include children up to 18 months old and lump-sum maternity grants have been introduced.

It is envisaged that in 1983 the introduction of partly-paid child care leave and lump-sum maternity grants will be completed throughout the USSR; that the eligibility for child benefit will be increased for families with relatively low income per head in the west and north of the country, and that exemptions for sending children to pioneer camps will be increased.

1984-85 will see the continuation of other measures aimed at ensuring that the community and family care of children can be rationally combined, that the situation of working mothers is made easier, that the difference between the living standards of families with and without children is reduced, and that favourable conditions are created for young families.

The participation of Soviet women in the struggle for peace

Soviet women unanimously support the peaceful aims of the Soviet government's foreign policy.

Soviet women gave a warm welcome to the Law on the Protection of Peace, promulgated in our country in 1952, which declares war propaganda to be the most serious crime against humanity. They welcomed with feelings of profound satisfaction the new Constitution of the USSR, adopted in 1977, which declares the highest aim of the Soviet state's foreign policy to be the policy of peace, of strengthening the security of nations and of extensive international cooperation. (p. 28)

Soviet women unanimously support the Peace Program for the 80's put forward at the XXVI Congress of the CPSU. The significance and force of this document are further increased as a result of the energetic steps taken by the CPSU and the Soviet government to implement new peace initiatives set out in the Soviet memorandum "On eliminating the growing nuclear threat and curbing the arms race" and in the proposals put forward by the Soviet Union to the XXXVII Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, "On the immediate ending and banning of nuclear arms tests" and "On increasing efforts to eliminate the threat of nuclear war and achieve safe development of nuclear energy".

For Soviet women the struggle for peace is a logical and everyday activity. For them as for the women of other socialist countries, the struggle for peace is inseparable from the struggle for the strengthening of socialism. Soviet women understand that personal and family happiness, and the future of their children are indissolubly linked to the fate of their country and to its achievements.

Efforts to achieve peace, and the national liberation movements in various parts of the world, receive considerable support from the Soviet Peace Fund. 350,000 regional, metropolitan and factory Peace Fund Support Committees have been set up, with a total membership of approximately 5 million. Fund helpers devote considerable efforts to promoting the patriotic and international education of workers and youth. And it must be noted that the majority of republican and regional Fund committees are headed by women, with women forming almost two-thirds of the more active Fund members in the provinces.

Today, approximately 80 million people are members of the Soviet Peace Fund, i.e. virtually every third inhabitant of our country gives financial support to the noble and humane cause of the struggle for peace.

Soviet women perceive the upbringing of the young generation in the spirit of peace and international friendship as forming an important part of their work to preserve peace. All those involved in the raising of the young generation in our country - the family, preschool institutions, the school,

professional colleges, secondary special and tertiary educational institutions, the media, literature, the theatre and the cinema - all participate in this work.

In schools, where 72% of all teaching staff are women, the teaching process gives the children an understanding of the social nature of wars and of real as opposed to illusory ways of achieving peace. Ideas serving to instil an active existential attitude to questions of peace form an organic part of textbooks. Thus, for instance, the 10th grade Social Sciences textbook stresses that "in our time, peaceful coexistence is an objective requirement for peaceful development and is the basis of stability for the entire system of modern international relations. It may be confidently said that there is no alternative to peaceful coexistence."

Education in the sphere of international cooperation, peace and respect for human rights and basic freedoms begins with the teaching of those rights and freedoms, so as to create a firm foundation on which students can base their behaviour throughout life. This subject, entitled "Foundations of the Soviet State and Law" is taught from the 8th grade (from the age of 14).

Education in the spirit of peace is combined with impressing upon the children a civic spirit, patriotism and internationalism. International Friendship Clubs attempt to establish friendly contact with children of the same age abroad, and this gives rise to a tremendous variety of activities.

An important event in the international democratic women's movement was the World Congress of Women which took place in Prague in October 1981.

The tasks facing Soviet women in implementing the resolutions of the World Congress of Women, on intensifying the struggle against the threat of nuclear war and for peace, were discussed at the subsequent Plenary Session of the Committee of Soviet Women, which took place in February 1982. The participants of the Plenary Session declared their unequivocal support and unanimous approval of the Leninist domestic and foreign policy of the CPSU, and noted that the Prague World Congress of Women formed an important landmark in the development of the international women's movement.

Participants in the Plenary Session of the Soviet Women's Committee expressed their support for the resolutions adopted by the Congress.

The Plenary Session unanimously adopted an Appeal to the Women of the World, expressing Soviet women's concern for the fate of the world. The Appeal conveys readiness to cooperate with all those actively promoting the cause of peace, disarmament and control of the arms race.

Soviet women have frequently appealed to women of the world. In 1981, the Committee of Soviet Women published appeals to mark the 40th anniversary of the start of World War II and to mark the United Nations' Disarmament Day and Week.

Soviet women strive to strengthen friendly contacts with the international community of women. They participate actively in international and national events which further the cause of rapprochement and of mutual trust and understanding. On the eve of the second extraordinary session of the General Assembly of the UNO on disarmament, a tripartite meeting was held in Great Britain between representatives of the Committee of Soviet Women, and the national organizations "Mothers for Peace" (Great Britain) and "Women for Ending All Wars in the World" (USA). The participants at this meeting addressed an appeal for disarmament to the second extraordinary session of the General Assembly of UNO.

The Committee of Soviet Women supported the initiative of the Prague Congress, for the 8th March 1982 to be celebrated as a Day of the Struggle of Women of the World against the dangers of a nuclear catastrophe. Rallies and meetings which adopted resolutions containing appeals to increase efforts to protect peace and to ensure a peaceful future for children were held throughout the country.

Soviet women took an active part in the Stockholm-Moscow-Minsk and Moscow-Vienna Peace Marches held during the summer of 1982 and in other antiwar demonstrations. In their speeches at these meetings Soviet women expressed their profound concern at the deterioration in the international situation, caused by the attempts of the reactionary forces to undermine the

process of detente; they stressed the need for all people of good will to combine their efforts to preserve lasting peace on our planet and to defuse the threat of war.

Soviet women's striving to preserve peace is reflected in the press - both in national and in republican magazines, including the magazines for women.

The magazine "The Soviet Woman", published in fourteen foreign languages, contains a regular column which acts as a platform for the world's scientists, entitled "Removing the threat of annihilation of life on Earth". The magazine publishes articles by doctors, lawyers, ecologists, biologists, physicists, chemists, etc. The aim of the column is to continually throw light on the evil consequences of the use of nuclear weapons, to show that talk of limited nuclear war is a monstrous deception, that a neutron war threatens an unavoidable catastrophe and that we must not allow a nuclear war to be unleashed.

Concurrently with the second extraordinary session of the General Assembly of the United Nations on disarmament, our country organized a Week of mass demonstrations for peace and against the nuclear threat during July of 1982.

Among the participants of the second extraordinary session of the General Assembly of the United Nations on disarmament was a delegation of the Democratic Women's Federation, headed by the vicepresident of the Federation, and the Chairwoman of the Soviet Women's Committee, V.V. Tereshkova. Her speech gave expression to the feelings of millions of women on our planet, who demand an end to the arms race and an end to the threat of nuclear war.

The participation of Soviet women in the socio-political life of the country

Socialist democracy is an important feature of the Soviet way of life. The Soviet political system is developing in the direction of increasingly broad participation of the citizens in the government of the country and

society, of wider publicity and greater regard for the views of the public. We are improving the system of national representation and continually broadening the competence of public opinion in various walks of life.

The expansion of Soviet women's participation in government, and the growth of their socio-political activity goes hand in hand with the process of increasingly complete democratization of all aspects of public life.

Soviet women, on an equal footing with Soviet men, make extensive use of their constitutional right to elect and to be elected to local, republican and national authorities. Approximately 50% of the members of selection committees are women.

An important index of the social activity of women at the present stage is the fact that they are widely represented in the Soviets of Public Deputies. In 1982, 1,146,000 women were elected to local Soviets; as this represents 50.1% of the total, it demonstrates that equal participation by men and women had been achieved.

This high level of participation of women in the activities of the Soviets is typical for all the Union republics. Figures from the last elections (1982) show that 50.7% of women were elected to the local Soviets in the Russian Federal SSR, 49.2% in the Ukrainian SSR, 49.6% in the Byelorussian SSR, 49.5% in the Uzbek SSR, 49.1% in the Kazakh SSR, 50.2% in the Georgian SSR, 48.1% in the Azerbaidzhan SSR, 49.8% in the Lithuanian SSR, 50.1% in the Moldavian SSR, 49.2% in the Latvian SSR, 50.1% in the Kirghiz SSR, 49.6% in the Tadzhik SSR, 49.7% in the Armenian SSR, 49.5% in the Turkmenian SSR and 49.6% in the Estonian SSR.

In the Supreme Soviet of the USSR (elections of 1979) there are 487 women, which is almost a third of all deputies; there are 2,400 women (36%) in the Supreme Soviets of Union Republics and 1,400 women (40%) in the Supreme Soviets of the autonomous republics. The number and proportion of women deputies in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and the Supreme Soviets of union and autonomous republics show a constant growth.

Women deputies are widely represented in the various committees of the Supreme Soviet, including the Foreign Affairs Committee, Youth and Health committees. Women participate in the discussion of bills, adoption of laws, approval of plans for socio-economic development, for the national budget and in deciding major issues of domestic and foreign policy.

The creation in 1976 of a permanent committee of deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on the Problems of Life and Labour of Women and the Protection of Mother and Child is of considerable importance. The Committee's recommendations are binding for all ministries and departments. The Committee prepares draft legislation dealing with the improvement of the status of women and children. Similar committees have been created in all the national Union and autonomous Republics, provinces, cities and regions.

More and more women are able to combine a high level of social activity and a businesslike approach to problem-solving with good professional training, to bring suitable qualifications to the solution of economic and cultural problems, and to apply modern management methods. They make a great contribution to the development of social production, thus promoting the further progress of the country. Women participate in the management and organization of industry, carrying out a wide variety of managerial tasks. 65% of all such jobs in the management of public affairs, the economy, the running of cooperative and community organizations are held by women. They can be found at all levels of the management structure.

At the present moment, there are over half a million women factory and State farm directors, managers of building sites and collective farms, and heads of government departments. Women occupy responsible positions in the Council of Ministers of the USSR and in republican Councils of Ministers. Nine women are Deputy Chairmen of Councils of Ministers in Union and autonomous republics, 27 stand at the head of ministries in Union and autonomous republics: among them there are ministers of industry, tertiary and secondary special training, health, education, culture, foreign affairs, social security and consumer service.

Women occupy a prominent place in the various departments of justice. 3,763 women have been elected to the People's Courts (1982); this figure represents 36.5% of all the People's judges in the Soviet Union. Among jurors in People's Courts there are 405,726 women, which is 54.9% of all such jurors.

The social organizations and popular associations of the working people are an integral part of the Soviet political system and an important means of the further expansion of socialist democracy and involvement of increasingly larger sections of the population in government, as well as of improving and developing collectivist relationships. The largest popular associations have wide powers of government over various spheres and walks of public life, as well as the constitutional right to initiate legislative measures.

The participation of popular organizations in the activity of the Soviet people's state is provided for by the Constitution of the USSR. They take, for instance, an active part in elections to Soviets of all levels. Many of them are represented on Selection Committees at all levels, have the right to nominate candidates and to make active use of this right. The views of social organizations are taken into account in the preparation of new laws and other legislative instruments.

The growing social activity of women is witnessed by the increased number of women members in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. At the present time, the ranks of the CPSU contain over 4.7 million women, i.e. 27% of all communists in the country are women. At the XXVI Congress of the Party (1981) women-communists were represented by 1329 delegates, i.e. 26.6% of the total number.

Women-communists occupy leading positions in Party organs. They serve as members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the Central Inspection Commission of the CPSU, as secretaries of provincial and district committees of the CPSU; a large number of women are secretaries of municipal and regional party committees.

Commenting on the high social standing of women in Soviet society, the XXVI Congress of the CPSU noted that there was still considerable scope for the further advancement of women to leading positions.

Youth organizations serve as an important training ground in social activity for young women. There are over 21 million women in the All-Union Leninist Communist Youth League, that is 52.5% of all members of the Komsomol. In keeping with this figure, more than half the secretaries of primary Komsomol organizations are women. Among regional and municipal Komsomol committee secretaries every third one is a woman, and among the secretaries of regional, district and central Komsomol committees in the Union republics approximately 30% are women.

Women participate actively in the work of trade unions.

Women form over one half the membership of trades unions, which are over 131 million strong. One third of the members of the supreme trades union body - the All-Union Central Trades Unions Council - are women (36%).

In republican, district and regional trades unions councils and inspection commissions there are over 47% of women. Women stand at the head of a number of central committees of individual industrial unions, republican and regional trades unions committees, acting as their secretaries and as members of the Presidium of the All-Union Central Trades Unions Council.

The Presidium of the All-Union Central Trades Unions Council has a special Women's Affairs Committee. Its members include women factory and office workers, women scientists and cultural workers. The tasks of this committee, and of other similar bodies attached to trades unions committees in industrial enterprises and organizations, include decisions relating to important socio-economic problems of interest to working women, specifically those relating to work and pay, the creation of healthy and safe working conditions, social security, cultural activities, assistance to families, etc.

Trades unions committees in industrial firms, enterprises, institutions and organizations, and their inspection committees include 65.4% of women members, with over half the committees chaired by women.

One of the manifestations of socialist democracy is the participation of women in the national inspection authorities. One half of the ten million public inspectors are women.

Women also participate significantly in cooperative organizations. Over half the shareholders of consumer cooperatives are women. They serve on the elective governing bodies of these cooperatives as well as on inspection and other public control committees.

The high level of general education and the constant growth of professional skills and specialist knowledge form the basis for the active participation of women in creative technical work. Over 2.5 million women are members of specialist scientific and technical societies. Approximately 180,000 women have been elected to their governing bodies.

Women play an active part in the work of social organizations: of the Committee of Soviet Women, the Soviet Committee for the Protection of Peace, the Union of Soviet Friendship societies, etc.

Women of the USSR are actively engaged in socio-political work in the sphere of strengthening friendship and cooperation with communities abroad. For instance, the Committee of Soviet Women maintains international links with 250 women's organizations in over 120 countries, participates in international, regional and national congresses, conventions and conferences dealing with the problems of peace, the equality of women, the struggle against apartheid and other forms of racial discrimination. The Committee actively defends the rights of women and children and supports the causes of democracy, social progress and the preservation of peace on earth, and gives moral support and material aid to women and children in countries struggling for freedom and national independence.

While participating actively in party, trade union, cooperative, youth and other community organizations, and in solving problems related to various aspects of the socio-political life of the country, Soviet women are also able, through those organizations, to participate in the work of the corresponding international bodies and to represent the interests of their country at various international assemblies.

Securing equal rights in the sphere of education

One of the main constitutional guarantees of equality is the availability to women of equal rights with men in education, based on the following principles:

- the equal right of both sexes to education by all citizens of the USSR;
- compulsory secondary education for all young people;
- the public and governmental nature of all educational institutions;
- freedom of choice in the language of instruction; instruction in the mother tongue or in the tongue of another Soviet people;
- free education of every kind, provision of full state maintenance for some students, free school textbooks, availability of scholarships as well as exemptions and other financial assistance to students;
- the existence of a unified public education system and the continuity of all types of educational institutions, which allow progress from lower to higher levels of education;
- the unity of education and communist upbringing;
- contact between upbringing and education of the young generation, and life and the practical aspects of the construction of communism;
- coeducational teaching, etc.

Budget expenditure on socio-cultural programs and study in 1980 was 98.8 billion roubles, and in 1981 - 103.6 billion roubles.

In the USSR, universal education up to secondary level is compulsory for both men and women. All educational institutions in the country are coeducational, and both boys and girls follow the same programs of study. The percentage of women among the students of higher educational institutions in 1980 was 52.2%, and in secondary special educational institutions - 56.9%.

Equality of men and women in all spheres of social and political activity, including access to education, has reduced the gap between the educational level of men and women with secondary and tertiary education both in the country as a whole and in all the Union republics. 840 women per thousand, and 851 men per thousand employed in the national economy, have secondary or tertiary (completed or uncompleted) education; 59% of specialists with tertiary and specialist secondary education are women.

Thus the equality of men and women in the sphere of education has become a reality in the USSR.

The existence of equal opportunities in education and work place has resulted in the wide participation of women in scientific work. 40% of all scientific workers in the country are women. In conditions of scientific and technical progress, the increase in proportion of women-engineers has assumed considerable importance (in industry, every second engineer is a woman). Almost three million women are members of specialist industrial scientific and technical societies. In the All-Union Society of Inventors and Innovators there are over two and a half million women.

Equality of employment

The Soviet Union has created every condition to enable women to exercise their equal right to work. Soviet legislation, which interprets women's equal right to work as the equality of labour rights of men and women, provides also for women to have the right to special working conditions which will enable them to combine work with motherhood. The Soviet woman's right to work is underpinned by an extensive system of guarantees.

The involvement of women in social production is encouraged by the entire system of socialist economics. As a result of the continual development of the economy, the increase in the volume of production, the unlimited opportunities for education and professional training, the legal prohibition of sexual discrimination in work, the existence of a system of privileges for working women and the introduction of special measures, the percentage of women working in the national economy has risen from 49% in 1965 to 51% at the present time.

The rising amount of technical equipment and increased levels of mechanization and automation of industrial processes, brought about by the development of the society's material base underpinned by advances in science and technology, require increasingly high levels of general and professional education in the work force. The level of qualifications and the extent of specialist knowledge are assuming decisive importance when increasing the efficiency of labour and its rewards.

To provide for the training of a qualified work force, the USSR has created a system of professional and technical (day and evening) education, with institutions where girls can learn the profession of their choice. During the period of study, students of both sexes are granted scholarships and provided with meals and uniforms.

Alongside the centralized system of professional and technical education, the training of workers in various professions as well as the acquisition of further qualifications, are provided directly at the place of work, through a wide network of courses, schools and training centres created especially for this purpose.

So as to create suitable conditions for the continuous improvement of workers' skills, industrial enterprises are set annual targets in the sphere of worker training and the improvement of work skills; since 1979 these targets include special tasks to improve women's skills.

The cost of all forms of industrial training and the improvement of skills or retraining is borne by the industrial enterprise. Improvement of skills

or retraining may take place as a result of the woman's own initiative, or be suggested by the management or the trade union organization, taking into account her wishes. The planning of changes in the professional structure of female employees is as a rule connected with an increased requirement for qualified labour, needed above all to operate new equipment.

The current legislation provides for general and special women's privileges during the period of their professional training. Among their general privileges are: a shortened working week or working day at half-pay for factory and office workers studying without day release, in general, vocational, evening or correspondence tertiary or specialist secondary educational institutions: and paid study-leave for those studying in such institutions.

In 1979, a special privilege was introduced for women workers with small children: they may receive preliminary training and improve their skills during working hours without loss of pay.

The largest proportion of women, according to the figures for 1981, is to be found in health care, physical culture and social security (82%), public education (74%), and culture (73%). In industry, women form 49% of the total number of factory and office workers, and in agriculture - 44%. The smallest number of women is to be found in transport (24%) and building and construction (29%).

The USSR systematically introduces measures providing a secure guarantee to exercise the right to work by every women. All those who have completed professional training are given work. Thanks to the steady pace of growth of socialist industry, all women, like all men, are in any case guaranteed full employment. In our country, technical progress doesn't lead to unemployment; on the contrary, it involves women even more fully in new branches of industry and in new kinds of work activity, requiring higher qualifications.

In order to improve the range of qualifications of women workers and to create more favourable working conditions for them, all industrial enterprises continue to introduce measures to mechanize manual labour and further to improve the sanitary conditions of women's work.

Soviet women not only have an equal right to work; they also have the right to equal pay for equal work. The pay structure, which includes various forms and systems of pay, bonus provisions, etc., is not differentiated according to sex and thus contains no differences in levels of pay for equally qualified men and women working in identical conditions.

A feature of the exercise of the Soviet woman's right to work is her ability to obtain employment with favourable working conditions, safe from the point of view of her health and fulfilment of her maternal functions. The Constitution of the USSR guarantees the protection of women's labour and health.

The protection of women's labour involves a series of economic, legal, medical and technical measures which the Soviet state implements so as to provide conditions which will enable working women to combine work in the national economy with motherhood.

The law forbids the unfounded refusal of employment, direct or indirect restriction of rights and the direct or indirect granting of privileges on grounds of sex.

In some jobs which are mainly performed by women, differentiated work patterns and production norms do exist. Thus for instance, in the textile industry, women weavers, spinners and twisters approaching pensionable age (over 45) have their production norms reduced. A shorter working week is granted to telephonists and nursery staff - 36 hours instead of the normal 41-hour working week, for doctors - 30-39 hours, etc.

With the aim of facilitating and minimising all types of housework, and replacing it by a communal means of satisfying the family's everyday needs,

community services are being rapidly developed, with service facilities being brought closer to the place of work. Many thousands of works now have convenience food stores, dry cleaners', hairdressers, etc.

Working women's free time is extended by providing them with the opportunity of selecting more convenient work patterns while they are bringing up their children, especially small children. A working mother may elect to work part-time for a period specified by herself, after which she returns to normal working times.

Motherhood as a social function of women. State aid to families

The Constitution of the USSR provides for the legal protection, and for the material and moral support of mother and child.

The state protection of motherhood is provided for by a system of special institutions - maternity homes, maternity wards in hospitals, antenatal clinics, etc., which care for the woman's health. Today, every woman receives free medical care during her employment.

Each year sees a further expansion of the network of medical and obstetric antenatal and postnatal care. In 1980 and 1981 alone over 1000 antenatal clinics, children's polyclinics and outpatients' clinics were opened, bringing the current total to over 24,900.

The All-Union Scientific Research Centre of Mother and Child Health Care was opened in 1979; in 1980 - the All-Union Centre for the Rescuscitation of the Newborn. Various other scientific institutions dealing with the problems of the mother and child were also set up in a number of cities.

Labour legislation prohibits refusing employment to women or reducing their pay for reasons associated with pregnancy or nursing. Employers may not dismiss pregnant women or mothers with children up to 12 months old. If a pregnant woman cannot perform her usual duties, a doctor's certificate enables her to be transferred to lighter duties for the duration of the pregnancy, while she retains the average pay applicable to her previous duties.

Nursing mothers and women with children up to twelve months old who cannot perform their usual duties, are transferred to other duties, retaining the average pay applicable to their previous duties for the entire nursing period or until the child reaches the age of 12 months.

If necessary, a pregnant woman may be hospitalized in a special-care institution against a paid-for medical certificate, or in a sanatorium or a maternity rest home. In such a case, the management in her place of employment in conjunction with the trade union committee provide her either with a free place or with one at a reduced rate; additional financial assistance may also be provided.

Working women are granted 8 weeks' prenatal and 8 weeks' postnatal maternity leave, with maternity benefit equal to full pay being payable during this period. If her labour is not normal, or more than one child is born, the postnatal leave is extended to 10 weeks.

Apart from maternity leave directly connected with pregnancy and birth women are granted additional partially paid leave to enable them to care for children up to the age of 12 months. Additional unpaid leave to care for children up to 18 months of age has also been introduced.

These leaves together with maternity leave count towards a total uninterrupted work record or record of professional work. In all the above cases the women retains her job.

Nursing working mothers are also granted, in addition to the usual breaks for meals and rest, additional 30-minute breaks every 3 hours to enable them to feed their babies; or their working day is shortened by one hour, which is counted as working time and paid for at the average rate.

In 1981, working women with two or more children up to 12 years old, who were entitled to less than 28 calendar days leave, were granted an additional three-days' paid leave and two-weeks' unpaid leave, in addition to the paid annual leave.

The aim of creating more favourable conditions enabling women to combine professional activity and the raising of children is furthered by the continual expansion of the network of preschool children's institutions: day nurseries and kindergartens. In 1981 the total number of such institutions was 130,000. The plan for 1981-1985 calls for the construction of children's facilities to provide 2.9 million places. In addition, an extended teaching day system, with children remaining at school under the supervision of the teaching staff, until the parents return home from work, is also gaining ground.

In the USSR the family is protected by the state which demonstrates its concern by creating and expanding a wide network of preschool children's facilities and by improving community services and public catering, providing maternity benefits, granting allowances and exemptions to large families and providing various other forms of allowances and aid for the family.

Since 1981, an extended system of financial aid has been introduced and new exemptions have been granted to families with children. Lump-sum maternity grants for the first, second and third children have been introduced in addition to the existing system of maternity grants payable on the birth of the fourth and each subsequent child.

Single mothers receive increased allowances for each child and the period of payment is extended in their case until the child reaches the age of 16, and for children in full-time education with no scholarships - to 18 years.

Additional old age pension rights have been introduced for women who had given birth to and brought up five or more children.

The father and mother have equal rights and duties where their children are concerned. The parents enjoy equal rights and carry equal obligations even in cases where the marriage has been dissolved. Problems relating to the upbringing of children and other problems of family life are solved by the marriage partners jointly. Marriage partners are obliged financially to support one another. During the wife's pregnancy and for one year after the birth of the child, the husband may not petition for divorce without his wife's agreement.

An important place in the system of state aid to the family is occupied by the social welfare fund, which finances aid of many kinds. During 1981 payments and exemptions granted to factory and office workers and funded from the social welfare fund formed approximately 38% of the average monthly wage.

The social welfare fund finances the chief needs of the family, associated with health care for the mother and child and the education and care of children. One of the key items in the system of financial aid to families with children is the maintenance of children in preschool establishments, which are attended by over 15 million children.

Families are granted the opportunity of selecting the type of establishment most convenient from their own point of view: day care, round-the-clock care or sanatoria. In rural areas, permanent children's institutions are augmented by seasonal ones.

Over 580 roubles per annum is spent on maintaining a single child in a day nursery; for kindergartens the figure is approximately 500 roubles.

The amount contributed by the parents forms not more than 20% of the sum required to maintain a child in a kindergarten. The remaining costs are covered by contributions from the state and it should be noted that the above amounts do not include building costs.

Aid to families with school-age children is channelled through the system of general and vocational schools and educational institutions. During the 1981/82 academic year, 44.3 million students attended general instruction schools.

The country systematically follows a policy of reducing the family's share of the cost of caring for a educating the children. Since 1981, the standard expenditure on food in children's homes, boarding schools and other boarding establishments has been increased. Since 1983, free school textbooks have become available to students in all grades of secondary schools. Over 2 million students combine secondary with vocational education in vocational educational institutions.

In cases where it is impossible to raise a child at home (e.g. where the family lives far away from a school), he or she may be placed in a boarding school, which provides food, clothing and text-books.

Considerable aid to parents in raising their children is provided by extracurricular children's institutions which help children to develop their abilities and interests, their social activities, interest in work, science and technology, art, and sport, as well as organizing cultural leisure activities. Over 40,000 such establishments - large and small pioneers' palaces, young technicians and young naturalists' centres, music, art and dance schools, children's railways, etc. - are attended by millions of children. The use of these facilities is not associated with any expenditure from the family budget; they are paid for by the state.

The organization of children's leisure during school holidays is of great importance to families. Pioneer and sports camps are therefore set up in holiday areas - in 1981 there were over 63,000 of them. 10% of all places in pioneer camps are provided free of charge, while others are offered at reduced rates. It is intended that by 1983-85 half the places will be provided free of charge, and half at 20% of their true cost. It is also intended that during 1982-1985 additional allocations will be made to increase the number of sanatoria and rest homes in which both the parents and the children can holiday and be treated.

Alongside measures of this kind, the state also aids the family directly through the provision of money allowances. Direct payments from the social welfare fund raise the family's material standards, solving the problem of satisfying its growing material needs. The system of such payments includes antenatal and postnatal maternity allowances, nursing allowances, allowances for the care of sick children, and allowances for single mothers and mothers of large families. Direct cash payments also include pensions granted on the loss of the breadwinner, and increased disability and old age pensions for those members of the family who are unable to work. Families with relatively low per capita income receive monthly child benefit. In 1981,

there was an increase in the minimum amount of old age, disability and loss of breadwinner pensions.

Social security for women

The right to social security provided from government and social funds, together with the right to work, provide the economic guarantee of material security for women, promote stability of labour relations, and enhance the part played by women in all spheres of society's socio-economic life.

The principle of equal rights for women in the sphere of social security is reflected in the equal level of payments for men and women. At the same time, in the case of many social security benefits to which men and women are equally entitled, there is special legal provision for additional privileges for women.

Women have the right to start receiving old age pension at the age of 55, after at least 20 years' service. For men, these figures are 60 years of age and at least 25 years' service (Article 8 of the USSR Law on State Pensions).

Mothers of large families enjoy preferential treatment with respect to their pension rights. Women who have given birth to and brought up five or more children start receiving old age pension at the age of 50, after at least 15 years' service.

In 1981 additional privileged old age pension rights were introduced for women with insufficient length of service, who are mothers of five or more children or mothers of handicapped children.

Both men and women pensioners have equal access to collective forms of social service and provision for senior citizens and the disabled: old peoples' homes and rest homes with full state maintenance. For senior citizens living at home, special social services brought directly to the home have been organized and are being developed further. They can have their groceries delivered, hot meals provided for a small charge and the necessary

services carried out.

The Soviet state provides monthly financial assistance in the form of living allowances to those handicapped from childhood. These allowances are granted and paid irrespective of the availability and amount of other income.

The position of women in rural areas

In the USSR, all the provisions of the Convention apply also to women who live in rural areas. Their equality with men is safeguarded by the granting of all the rights provided for in the Constitution of the USSR. Women living in rural areas also enjoy all the privileges and advantages provided for by Soviet legislation.

They exercise fully their right to education and professional training, to the free choice of profession and employment and to equal pay for equal work.

Women are trained to become members of the agricultural labour force at agricultural vocational colleges. Evening and correspondence courses at tertiary and specialist secondary agricultural educational institutions, which offer students additional paid leave to take their examinations, enjoy a large following.

The free choice of profession and free teaching are responsible for the increase in the proportion of women among the students of agricultural colleges, which took place in the 70s.

The percentage of women agronomists, livestock specialists, veterinarians, and economists with higher education working in agriculture is 38%, and those with secondary education - 50%.

All women who wish to work in the national economy are given employment. Among the total number of manual and office workers employed on collective farms 49% are women, and on State farms - 45% are women.

Mechanization and automation of various branches of agriculture is systematically carried out, improving the labour conditions of rural women who cultivate and harvest cotton, sugar beet, vegetables, potatoes and other crops.

The mechanization, concentration and specialization of agriculture have attracted women towards work with machines and mechanical equipment. Women machine operators are assigned to work on agricultural machinery with the most modern seat and cabin design.

Production norms for women machine operators who operate agricultural equipment are 10% lower than for men; they are granted an additional 12 days' leave, and they enjoy preferential treatment in the granting of old age pensions, which they start receiving at the age of 50 after 15 years of service.

Collective farms, based on the principle of industrial cooperation among farm workers, operate a system of guaranteed money wages with additional payments for exceeding planned yields, increased productivity of livestock farms and resource savings.

State farms have their wage rates and salary scales determined centrally by the state, with additional financial incentives for improved product quality and reduced production costs.

The increase in mechanization of agricultural work, the introduction of modern agricultural technology, the organization of such large-scale specialized operations as controlled water supply and irrigation, mixed feed production, etc., have resulted in a closer approximation between agricultural and industrial labour, in a considerable expansion of rural women's opportunities to exercise their right to work and in positive changes in the pattern of their qualifications.

Progressive changes in agricultural production form a firm basis for a continual increase in rural living standards for all categories of farm workers, and above all for women.

The constitutional foundations of the protection of women's labour are also fully implemented in the country. This refers specifically to the stipulation that women may not be employed, on work involving difficult or harmful conditions, and to the requirement of special protection for pregnant and nursing mothers. Rural women benefit from all the guarantees, privileges and forms of social service provided by the Soviet legislation to all working women, without reference to their place of work or residence: child benefit, special privileges for pregnant and nursing mothers, the availability of paid and unpaid antenatal and postnatal maternity leave as well as child care leave and leave to care for a sick child, etc.

All women in rural areas have access to regular preventive medical checks.

Women living in rural areas have the right to social security. Expenditure on pensions and allowances, on education and health care of the rural population is met from the national budget and the central collective farmers welfare fund. In 1980, the minimum amount of pension for women-collective farmers was increased by 40%.

In order to create better working conditions, working patterns more convenient from the women's point of view have been introduced. The improvement of rural women's working conditions also includes the provision of better sanitary facilities and community services, and the creation of favourable conditions for family activities and the raising of children.

Community forms of child care and community service establishments are developing rapidly in the countryside. In 1981, over 4.5 million children attended the permanent and seasonal (summer) children's preschool institutions organized in rural areas. Parents whose children attend rural kindergartens and day nurseries enjoy the same privileges as those living in towns.

The expansion and improvement of community service facilities in rural areas leads to systematic improvement of individual living conditions. In 1981, 3.2 times more community services were provided than in 1970. The scale of housing construction increases continually. On collective farms alone 57.7 million square metres of living space were built during 1976-1980,

and in 1981-11.3 million square metres.

Increased work activity of rural women is accompanied by a high level of socio-political activity. Rural women are represented in all administrative bodies without exception, starting with village Soviets and ending with the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Many women farm workers have been elected to leading posts in Party, Komsomol and trade union organizations, are managers of collective and State farms, members of collective farm councils, of rural consumer cooperative managements and inspecting commissions, etc.

Criminal legislation

The criminal legislation of the USSR or of the Union republics contains no provisions discriminating against women. On the contrary, a number of provisions of criminal legislation aims at the protection of women's rights and interests. In accordance with Article 134 of the Penal Code of the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic and the corresponding articles of the Penal Codes of other Union republics, it is an offence to refuse women employment, dismiss them or reduce their pay for reasons associated with pregnancy or nursing. All acts of amnesty adopted in the USSR provide firstly for amnesty to women with under-age children. Further, the law provides criminal responsibility for rape, illegal abortion in conditions hazardous to a woman's health, malicious refusal to pay alimony for the maintenance of children, keeping a disorderly house, procuring for material gain, paying or accepting bride money, forcing women into marriage or preventing marriage, bigamy, polygamy, etc.

Problems of marriage and family relationships

It should be noted that all forms of discrimination against women in matters relating to marriage and family relationships were fully rescinded by the very first decrees adopted by the Soviet power in December 1917. From that time on, all legislation dealing with marriage and the family systematically and steadfastly reiterates the total equality of men and

women in all maters of family law. In addition, the law contains special rulings which give mothers not only legal but also actual equality. All these stipulations are also reflected in current legislation.

The Fundamentals of Marriage and Family Legislation in the USSR and in the Union republics contain the following statement:

"In accordance with the equal rights for men and women, granted by the Constitution of the USSR, men and women enjoy equal personal and property rights in their family relationships" (Article 3).

Soviet law permits marriage to be entered into only by mutual consent of the parties, who are thereby enabled freely to choose their marriage partners. There is no requirement for the agreement of parents or of anybody else to the marriage to be obtained, and this guarantees full freedom in the choice of partner.

The spouses - husband and wife - enjoy equal rights and have equal obligations within marriage, and in the event of the dissolution of a marriage.

Protecting the interests of mothers, the law obliges husbands to support their wives, whether or not they are able to work, during their pregnancy and during the first year after the birth of the child.

The father and mother have equal rights and duties where their children are concerned; these rights remain equal even after the parents' marriage has been dissolved. The parents' rights and duties with respect to their children remain absolutely equal even if the child was born outside marriage, provided that paternity has been established either by both parents registering this fact in the registry office or by a court decision.

The parents' rights may not be exercised where they conflict with the children's interests. The children's interests remain the primary consideration in dealing with all matters concerning children - e.g. when deciding what name and surname the child will bear, with which of the two

separately living parents the child is to live, and how a separated parent is to participate in the child's upbringing, what rights of access are to be granted, etc.

A women has the right to make her own decision about childbearing. If she does not want children, she has the right to abortion which is performed free of charge in state medical institutions. Special antenatal clinics provide free advice, information and means of contraception.

A woman has an equal right with a man to become a guardian, custodian or adoptive parent of a child, and enjoys equal rights when carrying out such obligations. In the USSR, adoption is allowed only where it is in the interests of the children. The children's interests are the primary consideration in providing for guardianship or custody and selecting the guardian or custodian.

The husband and wife enjoy complete equality of personal and property rights arising from marriage. When marrying, they select one of the surnames as the common surname, this being either the husband's or the wife's surname. They also have the right to retain their single names.

If the marriage is dissolved, a wife who had taken her husband's surname may, if she wants to, retain it, or apply to have her maiden name restored; the husband has no right to object to his wife's retaining the surname she took when entering the marriage.

The spouses have equal rights to all property accumulated in the course of the marriage; each of them is equally able to own, enjoy and dispose of the whole property. These rights remain equal also when one of the spouses had been occupied in caring for the children, running the household or had other reasons for the lack of an independent income.

Property owned by the spouses before marriage remains their separate individual property. Each of them, both the husband and the wife, deals independently with their own property.

The ratification of the Convention by the Soviet Union was widely reported in the central and republican press: in such newspapers as "Pravda", "Izvestia", "Trud", etc. The national press commented in detail on the adoption of the Convention by our country. The publication of the Committee of Soviet Women, the journal "The Soviet Woman" started a permanent column entitled "Equality. Development. Peace", which carries information about the position of women in all spheres of public life in the USSR and in other countries, and gives coverage to the international women's movement, and women's struggle for national independence and peace.

The above information attests the Soviet government's fulfilment of all the obligations undertaken under the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women.